

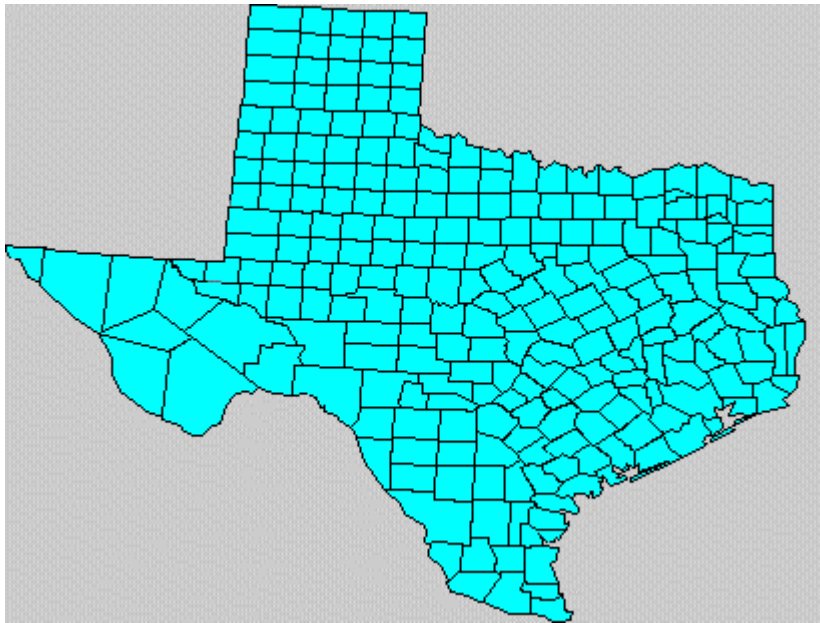
Office of National Drug Control Policy

Drug Policy Information Clearinghouse

Houston, TX

Profile of Drug Indicators

July 1999



ONDCP Drug Policy Information Clearinghouse staff compiled this profile by using the most recent data available from open sources. The data presented are as accurate as the sources from which they were drawn. The information contained in this profile should not be used to rank or compare States or jurisdictions, due to differences in data collection and reporting methods.

Houston, Texas

The following profile contains information on demographics, political figures, funding, programs, crime, drug use, drug trafficking, and enforcement statistics.

Demographics¹

Total Population, 1990: 1,630,553
Race/Ethnicity
White: 859,069
Black: 457,990
American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut: 4,126
Asian or Pacific Islander: 67,113
Other: 242,255
Hispanic (included in above distribution): 450,483

Politics

Mayor: Former ONDCP Director Lee P. Brown is the Mayor of Houston City.
Council Members: Annise D. Parker Joe Roach Bruce Tatro Rob Todd
Orlando Sanchez Chris Bell Martha Wong Jean Kelley
Michael Yarbrough Ray Driscoll Felix Fraga John Castillo
Jew Don Boney Carroll G. Robinson
Chief of Police: C.O. Bradford
Houston HIDTA Director: Stan Furce

Programs/Initiatives

- *Houston HIDTA²*

The Houston HIDTA was designated in 1990 and encompasses the city of Houston, the surrounding areas of Galveston, Harris, Aransas, Brooks, Jim Wells, Kenedy, Kleberg, Nueces, Refugio, San Patricio, and Victoria Counties. The HIDTA also consists of Federal, State, and local authorities.

Participating Agencies:

Federal agencies: Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, Drug Enforcement Administration, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Immigration and Naturalization Service, Internal Revenue Service U.S. Attorney's Office, United States Customs Service, U.S. Marshal Service.

State Agencies: Texas Department of Banking, Texas Department of Public Safety, Texas National Guard, and the Texas Office of the Attorney General.

Local Agencies: City of Baytown, Corpus Christi Police Department, Harris County Sheriff's Department, the Houston Police Department, the Nueces County Sheriff's Office.

The Houston HIDTA funds and oversees many initiatives including:

- Major Drug Squads
- Joint Drug Intelligence Group
- Money Laundering Task Force
- U.S. Attorneys Office Initiative
- Currency Narcotics Transshipment Initiative
- Narcotics Operations Control Center
- Targeted Offenders Group
- Post Seizure Analysis
- Texas Narcotics Information System

- Texas Coastal Corridor Initiative
- *Houston Crackdown*³
Houston Crackdown is a division of The Mayors Office for Public Safety and Drug Policy. The program coordinates and supports volunteer projects in the areas of substance abuse prevention, treatment and law enforcement. Houston Crackdown also runs a 24-hour bilingual *Drug Information Hotline* which provides access to treatment and recovery resources, drug information for youth and parents, a means to report illegal drug activity, and how to get involved in community drug prevention efforts. There is also a *volunteer coalition* of individuals and organizations both in Houston and Harris County. A *community awareness campaign* about the negative effects of substance abuse is also part of the program.
- *Mayor's Anti Gang Office*⁴
Gang activity is having a significant impact on crime trends. In 1996, approximately 3,600 gang-related crimes were reported in Houston, a total nearly identical to the 3,565 gang crimes recorded in 1995, and 260 fewer than in 1994. Approximately 25% of Houston's identified gang population are juveniles and almost 10% are females. Houston's criminal street gangs remain loosely knit. Additionally, they have not yet achieved economic security or control of any neighborhood in the city. Houston Mayor Lee P. Brown established the Mayor's Anti-Gang Office and the Houston Police Department Gang Task Force in 1994. Together they provide a balanced approach, combining prevention and suppression tactics focused toward reduction of street gang growth and development. This office deals with the problem of gangs in Houston. Its major components are the City-Wide Anti Graffiti program, Campus-Based Gang Intervention Plan for School, Youth Service providers/ Neighborhood Based Crime Prevention, and Curfew Program. The program has distributed \$450,000 of community development block grant funds to 49 local youth service providers. The program also provides free training to civilians, police officers, probation officers, and teachers.
- *Executive office of Weed and Seed: Houston*⁵
In 1995 Gulfton's ZIP Code, 77081, was identified as one of 11 in the state with the most referrals of delinquent youth to the juvenile justice system. The Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (TDPRS) organized the Gulfton Youth Development (GYDP) Program to implement a coordinated system of youth programs to address Gulfton's serious juvenile delinquency problems. In 1997, Gulfton was designated a federal Weed & Seed community.

Crime and Drug-Related Crime⁶

The Number of Offenses Known to Police in Houston 1995-1997

Offense	1995	1996	1997	1998 (Jan-June) ⁷
Murder and non-negligent manslaughter	316	261	254	114
Forcible rape	837	1,002	790	321
Robbery	9,222	8,276	8,146	3,593
Aggravated assault	11,885	12,917	11,967	5,772
Burglary	24,830	25,402	23,967	10,779
Larceny-theft	61,976	65,080	64,925	31,052
Motor vehicle theft	22,536	22,391	20,795	9,197
Arson	1,492	1,753	1,581	664

- There were 95,266 arrests for drug abuse violations in Texas during 1997 this is up from 78,440 in 1996.

• *Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring*⁸

Houston, Texas ADAM sample size: 584 Males 373 Females

Substance	Percent Positive	
	Male	Female
Any Drug	59.9	51.7
Cocaine	35.8	37.3
Marijuana	35.8	20.1
Opiates	7.5	7.0
Methamphetamine	0.2	0.0
PCP	5.7	2.1
Multiple Drugs	22.4	18.0

Percent of Adult Arrestees Testing Positive for Drugs, By Offense Type

		Cocaine	Marijuana	Methamphetamine	PCP	Any Drug
Violent Offenses	Males	27.3	33.3	0.0	5.1	50.5
	Females	41.9	25.8	0.0	6.5	58.1
Property Offenses	Males	33.1	38.7	0.0	7.7	61.3
	Females	33.3	19.0	0.0	1.6	47.6
Drug Offenses	Males	64.8	35.2	0.0	5.5	81.3
	Females	76.0	12.0	0.0	4.0	78.0
Prostitution	Males	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Females	66.7	22.2	0.0	0.0	77.8
Other	Males	30.3	35.5	0.4	4.8	55.4
	Females	27.9	21.5	0.0	1.4	45.2

Drugs⁹

Cocaine and Crack

- Cocaine HCl sells for \$75 per gram. Because of crack's deleterious effects on the African-American community, it is not the drug of choice among young African-Americans; however, it is reportedly popular among white and Hispanic street youth in Montrose who are turning to crack because of the poor quality of methamphetamine.

- There are two kinds of crack available in Houston: “pineapple,” which has a yellow tint, and “white,” the brownish-cream color traditionally associated with crack. A ‘bump’ of crack a (a “crumb”) sells for \$1; a “wholesale pack” of nine dime rocks costs \$50. Very few people are reportedly buying cocaine HCl to make their own crack rocks.
- “Crackhead specials” are two 16-ounce cans of beer that sell for \$0.99 at convenience stores in Houston crack neighborhoods.

Heroin

- Heroin is reported as more prevalent. Good quality Mexican brown heroin at 75% purity costs \$100-160 per gram. Black tar is reportedly of poor quality and selling for \$75 per gram.

Marijuana

- Both Hawaiian and Red Bud strains are available and selling for \$70-100 per ounce. Mixing marijuana and other psychoactive substances remains popular.
- “Primos,” marijuana mixed with crack in a self-rolled cigarette, is less popular among young people, but remains popular among working people because marijuana curbs the anxiety associated with crack’s psychoactive effects.
- “Fry,” “amp,” and “water-water,” which describe marijuana cigarettes dipped in embalming fluid containing phencyclidine (PCP), remain popular among adolescents, although vials of embalming fluid are not as available on the street. “Fry sticks” and “fry squares” cost \$10.
- “Fry sweets,” treated “swisher sweet” cigarillos, cost \$15-20. Swisher sweets continue to be the most popular blunt, although “Philly blunts” and “King Edwards” are acceptable substitutes. Ready-made blunts are becoming more prevalent; one cigar costs \$5, three sell for \$10; and four sell for \$15 at “sweet houses.” Ready-made “candy blunts,” cigarillos dipped in cough syrup, sell for the same price as sweets (one for \$5 and three for \$15) at sweet houses.
- Menthol cigarettes dipped in embalming fluid are called “sherms.”

Other Opiates

- The use of codeine cough syrup has grown in popularity, particularly in the African-American community. Between 1997 and 1998, the price of an 8 ounce bottle of syrup has increased from \$25 to \$60-80. It is drunk directly from the bottle; in Styrofoam cups; mixed with 7-Up, Big Red, or other soft drinks; or in cocktails. It is frequently procured through indiscriminate prescribing and the use of Medicaid and hospital district card benefits.
- Tylenol 4, which contains codeine, sells for \$4 per pill in Houston and is popular among older or more experienced injectors. It is also frequently obtained through Medicaid and hospital district card benefits.

Stimulants

- Use of “crystal,” speed, crank, or “go fast” remains low. Crystal is perceived as a substitute for cocaine and a palliative for “dope sickness”. Use is popular among

young adult club goers and men who frequent gay clubs. The price is \$20 per ¼ gram and \$100 per gram.

Depressants

- Flunitrazepam sells for \$1-3 but is less available than in the past.
- Alprozolam is popular among opiate users older than 30 because it levels out the highs and lows of opiate use. It is available on the street for \$2 per pill. Fluxetine (Prozac) sells for \$2 per pill and is combined with cocaine HCl and crack to provide a stronger and longer high. Capsules are occasionally opened and the contents inhaled, although the more frequent route is oral.

Hallucinogens

- LSD (“acid”) is popular among youth and adults of all racial and ethnic groups. The current cost is \$5-10 per hit. Older heroin users report that acid attenuates the high and “stops the nodding off.” It is alleged to help prevent dope sickness. Acid use is also popular among street youth that are interested in the 1960’s and 1970’s. Marijuana cigarettes and blunts are dipped in embalming fluid that may contain PCP.

*Drug Trafficking in Houston*¹⁰

- The Houston HIDTA's Threat Abstract sites that "...in recent years, drug trafficking and distribution in Houston has grown into a major industry. Geographic location, demographic makeup, and economic factors, including corporate and international trade, make Houston a prime location for the drug wholesaler and retailer. The region's proximity to Mexico, the number of air, sea and ground transportation opportunities make this a transportation hub. As much as 40% of the estimated 300 metric tons of cocaine that enter the United States annually pass through the Rio Grande Valley. The source of the drug trafficking threat is due to criminal activity of Columbian and Mexican drug trafficking organizations responsible for the trafficking and wholesale distribution of illegal drugs to and through the Houston HIDTA. Participating agencies identified 169 groups in the Houston area that are known to have been involved in illegal drug trafficking or money laundering. The number of active street gangs rose from 383 in 1995 to 392 in 1996. Cocaine is the greatest threat. Seizures were 34,372 pounds of cocaine; 126 pounds of heroin; and 168 pounds of methamphetamine."

Juveniles¹¹

Initiating behaviors of high school students.

Houston	Tried marijuana before age 13			Tried cocaine before age 13*		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
1997	5.5	16.3	10.5	1.0	1.4	1.2

*Including powder, “crack,” or “freebase” forms of cocaine.

High school students' reports of illicit drug use.

Houston	Lifetime marijuana use*	Current marijuana use	Marijuana use on school property**
1997			

	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
	32.2	53.1	41.8	12.4	32.8	21.8	3.3	12.3	7.4

*Ever used marijuana.

**During the 12 months preceding the survey.

High school students' reports of illicit drug use.

Houston	Lifetime cocaine use*			Current cocaine use¶			Lifetime "crack" or "freebase" use§		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
1997	6.3	9.8	7.8	2.0	4.6	3.1	3.1	4.8	3.9

*Ever tried any form of cocaine, including powder, "crack," and "freebase."

¶Used cocaine one or more times during the 30 days preceding the survey.

§Ever used "crack" or "freebase."

High school students' reports of illicit drug use

Houston	Lifetime illegal steroid use			Lifetime Injected drug use			Sniffed or inhaled intoxicating substances		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
1997	2.5	7.1	4.6	1.3	5.9	3.5	12.9	14.9	13.8

Trafficking and Seizures

- Houston HIDTA Seizures¹²

FY 98 Drug Seizures	
<i>Narcotics</i>	<i>Weights</i>
Cocaine	12,038.93 lbs
Marijuana	46,496.33 lbs
Heroin	14.53 lbs
Methamphetamine	24.08 lbs
Rohypnol	17,312.00 du
MDMA	1,000.00 du

Law Enforcement

- The City of Houston employed 7,937 full time law enforcement personnel in 1997, 5,310 were officers and 2,087 were civilians.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau Web site: <http://www.census.gov>

² Executive Office of the President, Office of National Drug Control Policy, *Houston Site Fact Sheet*, 1998.

³ City of Houston Web site: <http://www.ci.houston.tx.us/citygovt/mayor/crackdown.html>

⁴ City of Houston Web site: <http://www.ci.houston.tx.us/citygovt/mayor/antigang/profile.html>

⁵ U.S. Department of Justice, Executive Office of Weed and Seed Web site: <http://www.weedseed.org/siteinfo.asp>

⁶ U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Crime in the United States 1995, 1996, and 1997*, October 1996, September 1997, and November 1998.

⁷ U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Uniform Crime Reports January-June 1998*, December 1998.

⁸ U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, *ADAM: 1998 Annual Report on Adult and Juvenile Arrestees*, April 1999.

⁹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute on Drug Abuse, *Epidemiologic Trends in Drug Abuse Volume II: Proceedings*, June 1998.

¹⁰ Executive Office of the President, Office of National Drug Control Policy, *Houston HIDTA Threat Abstract*, 1998.

¹¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance — United States, 1997*, August 1998.

¹² Houston HIDTA, *Annual Report FY 1998*.

This State Profile was prepared by the ONDCP Drug Policy Information Clearinghouse. The Clearinghouse is funded by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy and is a component of the [National Criminal Justice Reference Service](#) For further information concerning the contents of this profile or other drug policy issues contact:

The Drug Policy Information Clearinghouse
PO Box 6000
Rockville, MD 20849-6000
1-800-666-3332
<http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov>
ondcp@ncjrs.org

